

E 423

.G78

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00005023853



LETTER

TO

HIS EXCELLENCY

WHITEMARSH B. SEABROOK,

Governor of the State of South-Carolina.

ON THE

DISSOLUTION OF THE UNION.

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.

CHARLESTON, S. C.

A. E. MILLER, NO. 5 BROAD-STREET,
1850.

E423

G-18

114 00

208

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

WHITEMARSH B. SEABROOK,

Governor of South-Carolina :

SIR,—It will not be thought presumptuous in any man respectfully to submit his opinions to your consideration, on a subject so important, as the dissolution of the Union.— Even they who have been most scrupulous in abstaining from all participation in the ordinary discussions of party politics, will need no apology for freely examining a question, in which not the success of party or persons, but the destiny of the whole country is deeply involved.

It is proposed to destroy the Confederacy of the United States. The people have so long and uninterruptedly enjoyed the beneficent influences of this crowning mercy to the wisdom and virtue of our ancestors, that they no longer appreciate the blessing, and are in danger of testing its value by its loss. They have lived in the healthy atmosphere of peace and prosperity which it diffuses around them, as they breathe the vital air, without a thought of how essential it is to their existence. We would destroy that which all other people similarly situated are craving to possess. The best men of Italy and Germany, taught by our example, have been long laboring and hoping to obtain this great remedy for intestine dissention, and aggression from abroad. United Italy, United Germany, are the day dreams of Italian and German Patriots. To realize them, they freely peril fortune and life. Until they can be realized, they see no hope for Italy or Germany. But we upon whom Providence has bestowed this pearl of great price, are willing to cast it away and trample it in the mire. The Statesmen of Europe, and Americans abroad, sufficiently removed from our sectional disputes, to be able to take a broad and comprehensive view of the subject, are astonished at the facility with which we

would destroy what they so clearly perceive to be of value beyond all estimate. They see from the vantage ground of their position, what we do not, involved as we are, in the dust and smoke of party disputation, that our Confederacy is the talisman which has produced the miracles of American progress, and made the United States the wonder and envy of all Nations; that without it, we should become the scorn and prey of the monarchies of Europe.

They ask us with astonishment, what is it you propose to destroy? Is it the Confederacy which for sixty years has secured undisturbed internal peace to a continent—which has conferred unexampled prosperity on the people of North America—which has enlarged their limits from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean, and increased the number of their States from thirteen to thirty-one—which establishes in this immense region the same laws, gives it the same language and literature, imparts to it the blessings of unlimited free trade and unrestricted social intercourse, and enables it to carry on, in unbroken links, from State to State, every kind of internal improvement, by which that trade and intercourse may be made more profitable and easy? It is Union which has imparted to the American people, the strength and influence of a great Nation. It is Union which has made their voice potential among the strongest of the earth. It is by the Union only, that we are enabled to bid defiance to all foreign aggression from whatever quarter. Who are indifferent to the advantages of the commerce, or would lightly challenge the hostile fleets and armies of the States united? Shall we, from this condition, reduce ourselves to that of separate and feeble communities? The fables of our childhood would rebuke our rashness and teach us the strength of Union, and the weakness of dissention and separation.

Let us reflect on these effects of the Confederacy more minutely. To the Southern man—the advocate of free trade—what can be more imposing than the condition of a

great continent more than equal in extent to all Europe, enjoying within itself, the most perfect freedom of trade and intercourse; no duties, no passports, no hindrance of any kind. Every man goes where he pleases; sells and buys what he pleases; establishes his household in any State of the thirty-one, with all the rights and privileges of the native citizen of each State, without any the smallest official interference of police, spy, or custom-house regulations. Nothing like it exists, or has ever existed on earth. In Europe you are stopt on the frontiers of every State. Your baggage must be rummaged, your passports *viséd*. In every petty principality, you are exposed to the insolence and ignorance of the government officials. New duties on goods, new examinations of persons, new difficulties of every sort, await you at every step. What a contrast this to the unrestrained liberty of intercourse, to the unlimited freedom of trade, which the Confederacy, and the Confederacy alone, secures to the American citizen throughout his immense country. And if these effects of the Confederacy be admirable now, what will they be when the population and wealth of the country are increased a thousand fold?

Again, what can be more admirable to every Christian man, than the unbroken internal peace which has prevailed for seventy years between the North American States—Nations as they are, with independent State Governments, with various interests, with feelings sometimes hostile to each other, with serious conflicts of opinion on important subjects from time to time, they have preserved and enjoyed, nevertheless, the incalculable blessings of undisturbed peace. Compare our condition with that of Europe for the last seventy years. Compare it with that of the South American States. Who can estimate the loss of life, of wealth, of progress in every science and art of civilized life, the crimes, the sufferings which the wars of Europe have inflicted on its people in the last seventy years? Look at the condition of the South American States, at their obscure and unintelligible wars, in which no one cares to ask who is victor and

who vanquished; at the rise and fall of military despots, rivals in cruelty and rapacity, with no law but that of the sword, and no prospects of an end to the reign of bloodshed, robbery, and utter lawlessness. From these evils, nothing but the Confederacy preserves us. No man can believe that if that grand conservator of the peace were destroyed, it would be possible to prevent in this country the existence of the same violence, plunder, and bloodshed. In a short time border disputes, for which causes always exist, would arise, with lawless men to head them. The States would be involved in the conflicts, and ambitious demagogues would be always ready to lead, to excite, to embitter the mutual hostility. Standing Armies will be created in every State, and military despotism be established inevitably every where. Can any man doubt this who has read a page of ancient or modern history? Greece, Italy, all countries, all ages afford lessons perpetually repeated, that cannot be misunderstood. Are we willing to be involved in such feuds and broils as characterized the modern Italian States? Are we content to engage in wars like those of the English Heptarchy, which Milton compares to the battles of kites and crows, as little worth a chronicle? Are we ready to exchange the rule of law and order, for that of petty military despotisms? If we are, then abolish the Confederacy, destroy the Union, and for peace we shall soon have wars that will be little better than murders, and rulers who will not be far removed from chiefs of banditti.

In this case, what will be your condition in relation to foreign countries? As a Confederacy we command the respect of all governments, as unconnected States, we shall become the sport and prey of all; as a Confederacy we can exact justice from France or England, or any other nation; we are an object of fear and apprehension to Spain; we have crushed Mexico in two campaigns; as separate States we should become contemptible in the eyes of Portugal or Naples. We shall have British fleets exacting private claims as in Greece, and troops from France or England

landing to adjust our quarrels, as on the banks of the Rio Plata. The commerce which now equals that of England, and exceeds that of any other nation, would be torn to pieces. There would no longer be any force adequate to protect it, among feeble communities, engaged in endless broils and feuds, and stript of all power except that of inflicting mutual injuries. The apparent destinies of the American people, so glorious in the past, so much more glorious in the future, would pass away like an unsubstantial vision of the night, and the great Anglo-Saxon race would mourn over the country, which they are now exulting in as the consummation of the power and honor of their name.

But it is said we can form a great Southern Confederacy and become, more than ever before, prosperous and powerful. Who can tell whether, even if separated from the North, this formation of a Southern Confederacy would be practicable? Where would it begin? What States would it include? Certainly not Virginia, or Kentucky, or North-Carolina, or Tennessee, or Louisiana. But suppose them all willing to take counsel for the purpose, can any one be assured that they would unite in a general Southern Government? Will there be no differences of opinion, no antagonist interests? We all know the difficulty with which the present Confederacy was formed, the obstacles that delayed and almost defeated its adoption by the States after it had been laboriously shaped and settled by the Convention* of States. Will not the same difficulties beset the union proposed? Why there is hardly a State in which there are not opposing interests within its own limits. Up-country and low-country, property and population, have each their staunch and sometimes bitter advocates. We all remember the hot and uncompromising disputes between West and East in the last Virginia Convention, and do we believe that in a Convention of the Southern States, supposing such an one to exist, there will be nothing but the milk and honey of mutual concession and forbearance, no hostile feelings, no conflicting interests, no impracticable obstinate

unyielding minds? He that believes this, knows nothing of men or public bodies. For my part, I firmly believe that the present Confederacy is the first and last which the country will ever see. If that be destroyed, there is forthwith forever an end to confederacy in North America. This is my solemn conviction, and I forewarn our citizens of this truth. No future Confederacy can be sanctified like the present by the memories of the past; by associations with the great men and great events of the grand epoch of American history; by the wisdom and virtues of the Father of his Country. If this Union cannot stand, there is no hope for the continuance of any other. The spirit of impatience to confederate rule which our example will sanction and establish will prevail forever. The smallest real or supposed injury or inconvenience inflicted on any one member of any future supposed Union of States, will be enough to induce that member to abandon it—to secede, to break up without scruple or remorse. They would become mere temporary partnerships, as the great English Statesman describes it, like partnerships for the sale of dry goods or groceries, to be dissolved with as little reflection or difficulty. We see this plainly enough as far as the North is concerned. No one believes that New-England and Pennsylvania could permanently unite, or that any State would long endure the arrogant and intriguing spirit of New-York.

But we flatter ourselves that in the South it is different, that we have a bond of union in the institution of slavery which alone will insure our cohesion, that *we* would stand united if all the world were at variance. Is the necessity of union among the Southern States any more apparent than was the necessity of union among all the States at the end of the Revolutionary War? They were then feeble communities exhausted by a long war, without money or credit, in debt, at the mercy of England, unless they adhered to each other, and yet it required the almost superhuman exertions of the ablest and best men of the country to persuade the States to accept the present form of government. Men are not swayed by rea-

son, but by passion, by prejudice, by interest, real or supposed, by the personal views of leaders, by the art of demagogues, by notions and fancies powerful, while they last, however short in duration. Will the South be exempt from these disturbing influences? Most assuredly not. Besides, is it certain that there will be no difference of opinion on the subject of slavery even in the South itself. Was there no difference in the Virginia Convention? So long as the question concerning slavery is between the North and South, we may count on unanimity of opinion and feeling in the Southern States, however much they may differ as to the mode of proceeding in vindicating their rights, or redressing their wrongs. But when the question is purely Southern, are we quite sure that we shall find the like unanimity? Will the mountain region agree with the coast? Will the men of Buncombe, or Spartanburg, or of East Tennessee, or West Virginia, consent to enjoy no greater political weight than the slaves of our rice and cotton-fields? Is it not clear then, that there will be abundant causes for difference and disagreement, and that the hope that all will be easy and smooth in the formation of a Southern Confederacy, is a delusion and a snare. It will not be easy. Once break up the present Confederacy and the principle of voluntary cohesion is gone forever. In this as in every other movement of change or revolution men never go back. The principle of voluntary association among the States will cease to exist. It will be followed by confusion and disorder first, and last by the forced combinations brought about by temporary interests, or military power. In this Avatar of disorder and ruin, the great pursuits of peace, civilization and refinement will be trodden under foot by the rapacious and ambitious demagogues, who begin with being courtiers to the people, and end with being their tyrants. To all this what answer can possibly be made, but that we are a peculiar people; among us there can be no dissention; we shall enjoy perpetual harmony from Mason and Dixon's line to the Gulf; no dispute or discord can ever disturb the fraternity of our peo-

ple; a new series of ages will descend from heaven; the lion will lie down with the lamb, the turbulent passions of men, and the crimes they lead to, will no longer deform the face of society, and Justice and the Golden Age, which have left all other regions of the earth, will nevertheless, revisit our own. If for this shadow and delusion, the mere dream of distempered imaginations, we let go the substantial blessings of law and order, and peace at home, and security from abroad, we shall most justly become a by-word among all nations. This is no occasion for listening to the voice of passion, or petulance, or indignation, however justly excited. It is one too grave, too solemn. No matter how much we may detest the vile factions that disgrace the Nation, let us not permit a proper abhorrence of them to hurry us into acts, the results of which no human sagacity can pretend to foresee. Let us not permit our minds to dwell lightly on the terrors unspeakable of civil war, and become instruments to accomplish what the worst men of the North are seeking and striving to bring about.

And for what are we urged to dissolve the Confederacy; to exchange unexampled peace and progress in all the arts of civilized life, in wealth, in national strength, in power and influence among the strongest of the earth, for the unimaginable horrors of civil war, and political disorganization? What act of the Congress of the United States will justify us to ourselves, our posterity, and the world, in putting at jeopardy this our great experiment in Republican Government—the benefits of which all people are now enjoying? Is it the Act settling the boundary of Texas? An offer to purchase her land is made by the United States for the purpose of quieting all disputes about that boundary. Texas is free to sell or not, as she pleases. Will any other State pretend to say that she shall not do as she pleases with her own domain? Have not Maine, Virginia, North-Carolina, Georgia, and other States, given or sold portions of their territorial possessions? Do we mean to erect ourselves into guardians of the persons and property of the good people of

Texas, and determine for them whether they shall exchange land which they do not want for money which they do? The Texan Senators approve, the Texan people accept the offer, but we refuse and profess to consider their sale of land for money as a violation of our constitutional rights, and a reason for dissolving the Confederacy. We claim the right to interfere, because of the consequential damages that may result to us. Why this is precisely the doctrine that Massachusetts is seeking to establish in reference to slavery in the South. She claims the right to interfere with our institutions on account of the injuries indirectly arising to the purity of her morals and the interests of her people. It is only necessary to state the proposition, and we see its extravagance.

Is it the passage of the Territorial bills for Utah or New Mexico, that constitutes the breach of our constitutional rights? It is perfectly well understood, that Mr. Calhoun repudiated the Missouri Compromise line. He would have acquiesced in its establishment, but would not seek it, or approve it, or vote for it. He demanded, whether north or south of that line, Territorial governments in which Congress should include no provision on the subject of slavery, as it has no right to legislate respecting it in any shape or form. And such precisely is the nature of the Territorial governments in question. The Congress of the United States have refused to incorporate in them the Wilmot Proviso. They have rejected that proposition by a large majority. They have passed Territorial bills without a syllable said on the subject of slavery. Ah, but we are told the Mexican laws are there. The Mexican laws, whatever they are, were not made by the Congress of the United States. We profess to dissolve the Union because the Legislature of the Union has infringed the Constitution. Where is the act of Congress which so infringes it? There is none. We might as reasonably say that the climate and soil of the Territory are equivalent to the Wilmot Proviso, and hold Congress responsible, as that the laws or customs of Mexico are so,

and regard the United States Government as therefore invading our constitutional rights. If the laws of New Mexico are contrary to the Constitution of the United States, those laws are void, and would be so declared by the Supreme Court. What more can we demand? Do we require that Congress shall interfere and enact that slavery is admissible within the Territory? Why this is at variance precisely with our own position—that Congress has no right whatever to legislate on the subject of slavery at all—that no such power is delegated—that any such assumption of power would be an usurpation. If we demand of Congress an act to admit, do we not in the same breath concede a right to exclude, and thus grant what we have all along most pertinaciously denied? No, the Territorial bills for Utah and New Mexico do not in the remotest sense infringe the constitutional rights of the South. The attempt to make other things which are not Acts of Congress, equivalent to Acts of Congress, and to draw the inference that the Constitution is infringed, is a sophism too evident to deceive, and quite too slender to justify a thought of dissolving the Confederacy for alleged violations of the Constitution of the United States.

Is the admission of California into the Union, the measure that will justify the destruction of the admirable creation produced by the Convention of 1787, and the restoration of the political chaos which the great men of that day so narrowly and happily escaped? If it is said that there was much of irregularity, of want of conformity to precedent, of haste, of disorder in making California a State, we may fairly admit it. The advocates of order know the advantage of forms, and wish to see them strictly observed. They would have been better pleased if in the formation of a government for California, there had been no departure from the regular systematic mode of proceeding in similar cases. But the whole case of California is anomalous. There has been nothing like it in the history of the world. The rush of multi-

tudes into the country, the character of a great part of these adventurers, the necessity for a vigorous government without delay to prevent absolute anarchy, all these things constitute an exceptional case, quite as much so as that of Texas, and may equally excuse the absence of Territorial government, prior to their admission as States. But, however this may be, whether California ought, or ought not to have been admitted into the Union, is a question of expediency merely. There is no infringement of the Constitution in her admission as a State. It is a question over which Congress have power to act at their discretion. They may, or may not have acted discreetly or judiciously on the occasion, but the right to act is unquestionably theirs. The single condition prescribed by the Constitution is, that the government of the State asking admission should be Republican. Has that condition not been complied with? If it has, then there is no other prescribed. The provision of the Constitution is, that Congress may admit new States.—There is no other in reference to the subject. One Congress may admit a new State under certain forms and regulations, another Congress may adopt others in another case. The *propriety* of uniformity is admitted, but the *necessity* of some regard to circumstances is equally apparent. Do we insist that the State applying should first have gone through a Territorial form of government? What then should we have done with Texas? Does the *circumstance* of her being a foreign State, justify a departure from the Rule, so also will other circumstances in other cases arising from time to time. There has then been no infraction of the Constitution, not the shadow of any. The assertion that the admission of California is a virtual adoption of the Wilmot Proviso is a mere rhetorical flourish, and we are called upon to dissolve the Union for a figure of speech.

It may be asked too, considering the question on the ground of expediency, what difference, what practical dif-

ference, the refusal to admit California could have made in reference to the question of slavery? Would the delay of a year, of ten years, have produced a shade of change in her policy? It may be fairly assumed that for one Southern man who would, under any circumstances, during that time, emigrate to California, one hundred or five hundred would go from other countries. Can we suppose that such a fraction of the population of the country, such an infinitesimal part of the people of California would shape its fundamental laws, and control its policy? So far, therefore, as principle goes, there has been no breach of the Constitution in the admission of California, and so far as expediency or any practical results or benefits to the South are concerned, the refusal to admit, and any consequent delay, would make no difference to the Southern States in any possible mode.

But it may be said, although there has been no formal infraction of the Constitution, there are reasons sufficiently cogent to justify the people of the South in resorting to the extreme measure of dissolving the Union. The resolutions passed by Northern Legislatures; the hostile language of Northern members of Congress; the abuse of Southern Institutions and character by the Northern press; the societies formed to assail our rights, and rob us of our property—these things are sufficient cause for offence and resentment. They are assuredly well fitted to excite the indignation of every Southern man, and to produce between North and South, mutual dislike and permanent animosity. They may lead, as a distinguished Senator from Georgia very justly remarks, if persisted in, to the inevitable consequences of convincing the Southern people, that there is an invincible incompatibility of character between the South and the North which may lead to a separation. But they have not yet done so. Whenever that point is reached, we shall have evidences clear and unmistakable that it is. When the indications of Northern enmity are so general and fixed, as to justify this

belief, there will be sure indications on our part that such is our conviction. Hitherto, there have been none. A series of resolutions at a mass meeting, a declamation before the people, or a State paper even from a legislative body, is not enough. These things are so easy, so common, so unmeaning, that they carry no weight with them. They not only require no sacrifice from the parties engaged, but afford them an agreeable excitement. Whenever we shall have reached the conviction, that the incompatibility between the North and South is so great as to make it impossible to preserve the political and social relations now existing between them, there will be something done as well as said—something will be resorted to, not like a barbecue and a speech which afford a pleasant recreation, but which will demand some sacrifice and self-denial, and give conclusive proof that we are in earnest.

In that case the remedy resorted to would naturally be appropriate to the evil we would redress. The wrong of which we complain is in the state of Northern Society ; it is social, not political ; it comes from the people of the North, not from the Government of the United States. When public opinion in the South is prepared to turn from resolutions to some more efficient defence, it will be of a social nature, therefore not a political one ; directed against the people of whose sentiments and proceedings we complain, not the National Government which has done us no injury. We are insulted, outraged by the sentiments expressed by Northern communities in reference to Southern institutions and character, and we are resolved to apply a remedy ; but we will not resort to an extreme one if another will do ; we will not fly to surgery if a simple alterative may be sufficient. We will adopt one appropriate to the purpose. To the social wrong we would naturally apply a social remedy. We would withdraw from all friendly or commercial intercourse with the offending States ; we would cease to waste our in-

comes in Northern Cities ; we would no longer trade in Northern Ports where our people now buy goods sent from the South, where they could have purchased the same article at a lower price ; we would discourage the purchase of Northern manufactures ; we would no longer send our sons to Northern Colleges to the neglect of our own ; or employ Northern vessels, discouraging the ship-wrights and masters of vessels in our own Ports.

These measures would be resorted to the more readily because whilst they spoke a significant warning to the Northern people of the consequences to which their acts and sentiments directly lead, and supplied in themselves an efficient weapon against the offending States, they would be the cause of rapid progress in developing the resources of the South ; in improving its Colleges : enlarging its manufacturing enterprise ; increasing its domestic tonnage ; and spending on improvements at home the large sums of money now squandered abroad. They may be sufficient to effect a cure of the evils of which we complain, without encountering the crimes and sufferings of civil war. And surely it is the part of prudent men not to resort to desperate measures until all others have been tried and found to be unavailing. No surgeon amputates a limb, until he has lost all hope of saving it. The physician does not abandon the patient, until every remedy has been exhausted. Shall we be less careful and hopeful, when the limbs or life of a Nation are concerned ?

It has been sometimes thought that the disputes and divisions among certain Theological bodies are of evil augury, and portend civil and political dissensions in the nation. As justly might we conclude that the schism which has lately rent asunder the Church of Scotland, affords evidence of intestine commotion in that country. Every one knows that of all assemblies of men, the most pertinacious and uncompromising in opinion are those of the Clergy, and that above all other meetings under the sun, they are most prone to ex-

hibit, not charity, forbearance, and brotherly love, but the absence of those virtues. That disputes should arise in the Baptist, Methodist, and other Churches of the United States, is not a whit more surprising than that they have existed, and do exist, in the Catholic, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian Churches of other countries. Between the Gallican and ultramontane parties of the one, or the Puseyite and low Church divisions of the other, or the free and established Church sections of the third, the controversy is quite as great and as serious as that of the Churches in this country. In either case they prove nothing but the proneness of Theologians to wrangle. The odium Theologicum has therefore long been proverbial. Do we expect to escape it in this country? Or shall we regard its existence as proving any thing more than a certain idiosyncrasy in an excellent but irritable class of men which is continually turning discussion into dispute.

It cannot then with any justice be said, that there has been any infraction of the Constitution in the measures lately adopted by Congress. Neither can it be asserted, that public opinion in the Southern States has given any clear and unmistakable evidence of a conviction on the part of our people that they can no longer continue their social, civil, or political relations with the Northern States.

For my own part, I cannot but hope, that the feeling of alienation, and the causes that have produced it, may be equally transient. It was thought a virtue in ancient times not to despair of the Republic, and there is no reason why it should be any the less a patriotic duty now. That causes of dissention and dispute should spring up from time to time, between States so numerous and various in interest, is not surprising. Similar as they are in character, language and customs, more so than the people of any other country, yet it will occasionally happen that conflicting interests will produce hard words and hostile feelings. In the great coun-

cil of the nation, these feelings find their vent in angry debate. The fierce passions of a popular assembly diffuse themselves through the minds of the people, and the States appear at times to be on the verge of open rupture and civil war. But so long as the conservative power of the Confederacy exists, these contentions are harmless. They beget a speech in Congress, or a suit in the Supreme Court, nothing more. The causes which produce them pass away like other fashions of opinion. New combinations of interest are formed, other men with different principles and altered sentiments, occupy the political field, and amid the excitements of new pursuits or contentions, look back with wonder at the angry disputes which excited the passions of their predecessors. Sixty years ago Massachusetts was actively engaged in the African Slave Trade, who can tell what opinions she may entertain sixty years hence on the subject of slavery? A variation in circumstances, a change of interest, a new fashion of philanthropy, may make so great a change, that her zeal for colored citizens and African emancipation may become as obsolete as her belief in witchcraft, or in the orthodox faith of her Pilgrims.

At least, let us not suffer anger and indignation, however just, to hurry us into measures the consequences of which no human eye can perceive. You apprehend future aggression and wrong, in addition to the present, but sufficient for the day is the evil. The maxim is of Divine authority. It is not the part of wisdom to rush into certain ills for the purpose of avoiding contingent troubles. The future is in the hands of Providence. No fretful impatience on our part can change his purposes. If the present does not demand extreme measures, let us not anticipate a future necessity that may never come. We may well wait. The South is growing more rapidly in wealth and power than at any former period of her history. Hitherto, the incomparable climate and fertile lands of the interior

have been difficult of access. The Railroads, in use and about to be constructed, will open them to the knowledge and enterprize of all the world. Hitherto the industry of the South, content with its agriculture, has sought no other employment. Now her cotton manufactures compete successfully with those of any other country. A single undertaking in this direction has built up in four years among the barren hills near Aiken, a well ordered community of fifteen hundred persons, and bestowed upon them comfort, education, religious teaching, and growing intelligence and refinement. A new impulse has been given to Southern enterprise, and ten years of successful industry from this time forward, will do more to increase the wealth, population and resources of the Southern States, and make them independent of all the world, than any previous forty in their progress. Such are the prospects before us, if the energies of the people are not diverted from the pursuits of peace, to be exhausted and wasted in the devastations of civil war.

It is sometimes attempted to justify a resort to such a war by drawing a parallel between our present relations with the General Government, and those of the Colonies with England at the time of the Revolution. Because the American people threw off the government of Great-Britain in establishing their political liberties, we are urged to destroy the Confederacy as inconsistent with their present existence. But a moment's consideration will point out the essential difference in the two cases. In the first, the aggrieved people had no lot or part in the government. They did not assist in forming it; they made no portion of it; they were without representation in either legislative body, and over its judicial or executive powers they had no influence direct or remote. The demand on the part of America was, to be represented before she was taxed—a demand so fair that the first men of England admitted its justice. But in the present case, in reference to the relations we hold to the

General Government, the circumstances are directly the reverse. We assisted largely in forming it ; we have our full share of representation according to contract, in both houses. In the Senate we have the same weight that New-York or Ohio has with five times the population. In the election of the Executive, we have our just proportion of influence, and our lawyers have not been without seats on the bench of the Supreme Court. With what reason can we compare this condition of things with that in which the Colonies of America were governed by a monarchy three thousand miles off, knowing nothing of their character, caring nothing for their interests, and allowing them no participation in its counsels? What was virtue and patriotism in the one case, may prove to be but a turbulent and factious spirit in the other. Let us leave this spirit to the North, if they choose to nurse it, but for us, let us preserve the work of the Father of his Country, and maintain the Confederacy, in conformity with his advice. We boast of the conservative spirit of the South and justly, but assuredly we shall give no evidence of it, in destroying the power which alone preserves the peace of this great country, and secures it from the miseries of intestine strife.

I have not adverted to the proposal of what is called State action. I cannot believe that the State, having pledged herself not to proceed in advance of her neighbors in a matter of common concernment, will violate that pledge in a spirit of restless impatience. It is said, as a reason for such a measure, that if the State secedes it will compel the adjoining States to join and support her. And is this a cause for action that becomes the character of South-Carolina? Would it be consistent with the strait forward integrity of purpose that belongs to her, to draw or force her sister States into a position which their deliberate judgment might avoid or disapprove? Shall we rest success in so important a proceeding on the chance sympathy of others?

Suppose after all they refuse to join us as they did under the same sanguine anticipations in the time of Nullification? Suppose that they consider our advance as rash and regardless of the opinions of those, equally interested and equally competent to decide judiciously on the question at issue? What then will be our position? Shall we fall back into the Union amidst the jeers of the world, or will the State stand apart and alone—the San Marino of North America—without fleets or armies, or any of the resources essential to independent power, existing not by her own strength, but by the sufferance only of the great and influential among foreign nations. No man of Carolina, who will consult his judgment and not his impulses, can desire to see the State of his pride and love reduced to a condition so pitiable and so contemptible.

This then is the substance of the foregoing remarks; that the Union is the source of peace prosperity and power to the Nation, and its dissolution would be followed by disorder, violence, and civil wars; that if the present Confederacy is broken up, the formation of any other would be difficult and its continuance impossible; that no causes exist to justify the destruction of the Union; that the measures lately adopted by Congress are not infringements on our constitutional rights, if they were, they are of common concern to the whole South; that there are no manifestations of public opinion in the South that seem to demand even a cessation of social and commercial intercourse, far less a dissolution of the Union; that the mere apprehension of aggressions for the future will not justify the resort to extreme measures for the present; that the South will lose nothing by waiting, she is rapidly advancing in wealth, population, and power, and nothing can arrest her progress but the imprudence of her own people, and the rashness of her leaders.

In expressing the foregoing opinions so freely, I beg it to be understood that I entertain the most sincere respect for

those of our State with whom I so widely disagree. That their judgment is in error I am firmly convinced, but that their motives are as pure and as elevated as ever actuated the purposes of men, I believe as firmly. If I consulted my feelings only, I should be content to remain silent, and acquiesce in the proceedings of old and valued friends, with whom it gives me pain to differ. But the present occasion is too momentous for this. It is pregnant with the fate of our whole country for all coming time, and I consider it a duty frankly to express the opinions which I have calmly and conscientiously formed on a subject respecting which it becomes every man to think deliberately, and to speak without reserve.

For yourself, sir, permit me to express the esteem which a long and intimate acquaintance has continually increased, and to hope that you may be able to guide the State, of which Providence has made you the ruler, through the difficulties that beset her path, looking not to sectional passions and prejudices, which may pass away and be forgotten, but to the happiness of the whole country for all time to come.

With respect and esteem,

Your obedient servant,

W. J. GRAYSON.

Charleston, Oct. 17, 1850.

NOTE.

The fugitive slave Act has not been referred to, because I proposed to confine myself to those measures only in the plan of pacification which have been denounced in the South as invasions on her rights. The fugitive Act is not one of these. We may doubt its efficiency, but we all admit the propriety of the measure.

There is one point of view however, in which this Act commends itself to our notice. It merits attention as it expresses emphatically on the part of the General Government, a disposition to carry out the provisions of the Constitution and to do us justice. As one of a system of measures, adopted for peace and conciliation, it is important as indicating the character of that system. It speaks to the motive of the whole scheme. It shows that it was the purpose of Congress and the Executive to respect, to assert, to maintain the rights of the South. Is it not due to candour to admit this, and admitting it, can it be affirmed that the General Government is regardless of the constitutional rights of the Southern States? The very fact that this measure is odious to certain classes at the North, proves more clearly the resolution of the Government to do its duty. We may differ, and do differ, as to the character of the kindred measures, though the majority of the Southern people accepts them, but about the fugitive slave Act, there is no difference of opinion, nor can there be any as to the evidence which it conclusively affords that the charge upon the National Government, of recklessly trampling on the Constitution and tearing it to pieces, is only one of those monstrous chimeras which party excitements produce in such abundance, as mischievous as they are ephemeral.

But the efficiency of the Act is denied. We profess to think that it will not be executed ; the people of the West

and North say that it shall be ; *it has been* already enforced promptly and resolutely. Let us not condemn before we hear, or act on the assumption that the law will be resisted and repealed because a lawless faction is opposed to it. Free negroes and abolitionists, in New-York or New-England, may threaten Bowie knives and revolvers, but the friends of law and order are more numerous and determined. Let us not mistake the brawling of the “beastly rout,” for the voice of the people—the noise, as Burke expresses it, “of the insects that fill the air with their importunate chink, for the utterance of the great cattle of the field that are quietly browsing in the shade.” The motley crew with their piebald projects and petty ambitions, will pass away and be forgotten. They are but the dust on the Temple of American Liberty. Time will scatter it to the four winds of heaven, whilst he adds perpetually to the grandeur and beauty of the edifice which it obscures and deforms but for a season only.



WERT
BOOKBINDING
Granville Pa.
Jan - Feb 1968
WERT BOOKBINDING

